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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2466
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0863
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2856
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2241
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
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RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000283

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GEHRENBECK)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/25/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ PRESIDENT'S "VACATION" TRIGGERS RAMPANT
RUMORS

REF: A. BISHKEK 256

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 221

BISHKEK 00000283 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Kyrgyz President Bakiyev's extended absence from the country, reportedly for a "short vacation" in Germany, fueled speculation that Bakiyev was seriously ill or had died. While several officials have told the press that they had spoken to Bakiyev on the phone, Kyrgyz media have not broadcast any footage of Bakiyev since he left the country March 3. Bakiyev is widely believed to be undergoing medical treatment in Germany, but Kyrgyz presidential administration officials were slow to counter rumors of his death. Foreign Minister Karabayev told the Ambassador that there was "no basis" for the rumors. Any delay in Bakiyev's rescheduled March 28 return to Bishkek will likely generate another wave of speculation regarding his long-term health. End summary.

Rumors Run Rampant

[1](#)2. (C) With Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's absence (officially he has been "vacationing" in Germany since March 3) extending past the official March 24 celebration of the 2005 revolution which propelled him to power, rumors concerning Bakiyev's well-being inundated Bishkek over the four-day holiday weekend. While speculation after his departure focused on possible kidney ailments or hip replacement surgery requiring treatment in Germany, this weekend's rumors stressed death or serious injury resulting, possibly, from an altercation with a close family member. The weekend rumors included a gunshot or knife injury sustained after confronting his younger son Maxim about the latter's business activities. Another rumor identified an

unnamed presidential sibling as the alleged culprit. A different version indicated that President Bakiyev had, in fact, passed away.

Kyrgyz Administration Slow to React

13. (C) The presidential press service and other official outlets have provided very little commentary, and no film footage or photographs, this month regarding President Bakiyev's activities in Germany. Several officials, including Presidential Chief of Staff Medet Sadyrkulov and Speaker of Parliament Adakham Madumarov, have said that they have spoken to Bakiyev on the phone, and former Prime Minister Almaz Atambayev reportedly said that he had visited Bakiyev in Germany, that the doctors had "solved the problems with his joints," and he was undergoing rehabilitation.

14. (C) Despite rampant speculation regarding a serious injury to or death of President Bakiyev over this past four-day weekend, presidential administration officials only began countering the rumors systematically March 24. The presidential press service stated that Bakiyev's health "does not arouse any concerns," and that he would return to the country on March 28. Sadyrkulov said the opposition was making up the story of the President's death and using it for their purposes on the third anniversary of the revolution. Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ednan Karabayev categorically denied the rumors to the Ambassador. On March 25, Deputy FM Ibraimov told the DCM that the rumors were just that, and that he personally was working on the diplomatic flight clearances for President Bakiyev's return on March 28. However, Ibraimov was interested to know "how seriously" the U.S. was taking the rumors, and whether we had any sources in Germany.

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Comment

15. (C) It is curious that the presidential administration is not releasing video of a happy, active Bakiyev to the media. Such a step would squelch the rumor much more quickly than Sadyrkulov's assurances. Soviet practices die hard, but Kyrgyz stonewalling raises the question of whether there is some truth to the rumors. While there is broad consensus among outside observers that Bakiyev has been receiving medical treatment in Germany, the severity of his condition or if there is any condition of concern will not be fully apparent until he appears in public. Sadyrkulov has indicated that media will be invited to record Bakiyev's return to Bishkek, and that Bakiyev will chair a meeting of the government upon his arrival. Any delay in Bakiyev's return past March 28 will likely stir another bout of rumors.

Embassy will continue to monitor Bakiyev's health.
YOVANOVITCH